

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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TO: All Design Review Board Members

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SUBJECT: Brannan Street Wharf Project – The Embarcadero, between Piers 30-32 and 38, City and County of San Francisco; Fourth Review
(For Board consideration on July 6, 2009)

Project Summary

Project Applicant: The Port of San Francisco (the “Port”).

Project Representative: Dan Hodapp, Port of San Francisco.

Project Site. The Brannan Street Wharf would be a new open space area along the Embarcadero between Piers 30-32 and 38, defining the center of the South Beach neighborhood in the City and County of San Francisco. It would replace all or parts of the dilapidated Piers 34 and 36 and provide approximately 57,000 square feet of new pier extending out over the water.

Background. The Port of San Francisco and BCDC developed the concept of the Brannan Street Wharf (“Wharf”) when these two agencies reached a historic agreement in July 2000, regarding land uses and development on the San Francisco waterfront. The Wharf is identified as a major neighborhood and destination open space in BCDC’s amended Special Area Plan for the San Francisco Waterfront, the Port’s Waterfront Land Use Plan, and the City of San Francisco’s General Plan-Northeastern Waterfront Area Plan. The Wharf was also identified as a crucial component in the State legislation for the development of Pier 30-32 as a cruise terminal project, passed in 2001.

In preparing the concept design for the Wharf, the Port and BCDC conducted a series of citizens advisory committee (“CAC”) meetings and public workshops during 2001 and 2002. The conceptual design was presented to the Port’s Waterfront Design Advisory Committee (“WDAC”) and BCDC’s Design Review Board (“DRB”) three times and concluded in December 2002, with a proposed concept design (“Concept Design”).

Project Description. The proposed project would involve the construction of a new wharf connected to, and running parallel to, the Embarcadero Promenade beginning at the south edge of Pier 30-32 and extending for about 830 feet through the area of Pier 36 (see Exhibit 3). The Wharf would have a wedge shape with its narrowest point adding about a 10-foot-section to the edge of Pier 30-32 and widening to about 140 feet at the south end of Pier 36. The major project components include a 400-foot-long lawn area, a waterside walkway with seating, shade-sheltered picnic/game tables, and a small-craft float. The design remembers its San Francisco waterfront history by taking on the shape of Pier 36 in its original location and through interpretive exhibits. The Wharf is designed mostly at grade to the Embarcadero, with the lawn laid in a raised planter 18 inches above grade, and surrounded by a seawall. The Wharf is designed with openness to orient the Wharf both toward the Bay and the adjacent neighborhood.



Prior Board Review and Comments. Exhibit 2 shows the Concept Design that was presented to the WDAC and the DRB in 2002. During the last review of the project by these design boards, the following recommendations and comments were made:

- Support the revised (wedge shape) design due to the strong simplicity of the form;
- Consider adjusting the float location to the south edge of Pier 36 and straightening it;
- Re-evaluate the planter at, and north of, Brannan Street for its appropriateness within the plaza;
- Express the lawn as a planter so as to acknowledge it as a contained environment on top of a structure;
- Preference for the wavy eastern edge of the lawn but this was not a unanimous opinion;
- Interpretive information and public art should have an interactive or physical expression as to how they describe the natural environment, as opposed to descriptions that rely solely on signage; and
- Include a description of how park maintenance would be addressed in the final concept plan.

Proposed Design. The Concept Design has been refined and modified to respond to the design review recommendations while also keeping intact the open space program elements developed by the CAC (see Exhibits 3 - 14). Modifications include:

- Relocating the float to the south edge of Pier 36;
- Removing the planter at the north edge of Brannan Street and allowing the area to be a widened wharf with seating and interpretive elements;
- Continuing to express the lawn in a 18-inch-height raised planter and developing the surrounding seat wall as a sculptural and playful edge; and
- Expressing the rail lines that served Piers 36 through the pavement including using an alignment to access the public float.

Special Area Plan Policies for the Brannan Street Wharf. The following are the San Francisco Waterfront Special Area Plan (SAP) policies for the Brannan Street Wharf:

1. **The Plaza.** The SAP calls for the creation of the Brannan Street Wharf to serve the South Beach neighborhood, the City of San Francisco and the region. The SAP states that the park should be a minimum of 57,000 square feet in size and extend at least 600 feet along the Embarcadero, bayward of and not including Herb Caen Way. The new Wharf should reflect the character and needs of the South Beach neighborhood and visitors to the area, should establish a unique activity center, should provide a respite between the adjacent, more intensively developed areas, and should accommodate a variety of possible recreational activities and serve as both a local and regional destination.
2. **Removal of Piers 34 and 36.** The SAP calls for the removal of Piers 34 and 36 to create new, permanent open water beyond the Wharf. Portions of these piers can remain and be incorporated into the Wharf provided that these remnants are structurally sound. Pier removal and park construction should result in a net fill reduction of approximately 140,000 square feet. The park may be expanded up to 1,000 feet in length to include one or both of the marginal wharves to the north and south (one wharf is located between Piers 34 and 32 and one is located between Piers 36 and 38).

3. **Uses.** The SAP states that the uses that should be considered in the program for the park include informal small play fields (e.g., volleyball), tot lots or other facilities for children, viewing areas, picnic areas, and other uses consistent with a recreational park theme. On the water side, uses to be considered include transient boat tie-ups, kayak and other handheld craft launch and landing areas, and related, water-oriented recreation facilities in order to enliven the adjacent new park.
4. **Design.** The SAP calls for a park design that is well integrated with Herb Caen Way. The plan also states that a cohesive design treatment should be applied to the entire Open Water Basin edge, including the south apron of Pier 32, the park and the north apron of Pier 38. The plan states that the detailed design of the park should: (1) reflect the park's location over the Bay; (2) provide viewing areas, seating, and picnic areas; and (3) provide for other uses consistent with a recreational park, such as fountains, interpretive signs, a small amphitheater, sheltered areas for activities such as chess and checkers, fish cleaning facilities, public art, water stairs, and site furnishings.
5. **Commercial Uses.** The SAP states that the park users should be served primarily by new commercial uses at Pier 30-32 and Pier 38 with limited accessory commercial uses in the park that are clearly incidental to and supportive of the park uses, such as food carts and small kiosks. These uses should be concentrated within the existing marginal wharf areas to either side of the new park or located so that they do not interfere with the recreational use of the park.
6. **Vehicular Access.** The SAP states that only maintenance and emergency vehicles may be permitted in the park.

Design Review. Staff is seeking the Board's input and advice on the quality of the revised proposal for the Brannan Street Wharf. In particular, staff requests that the Board comment on whether the refinements to the previous Concept Design respond to the Board's previous recommendations and results in a park design that is well integrated with Herb Caen Way and the South Beach neighborhood.